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THE TRANSMISSION AND DATE OF *GENESIS B.*

How came the Old Saxon *Genesis* to England? Who carried it thither? When was it transplanted from the Continent, to become a riddle and a testimony of international relations? These questions have been answered very vaguely, and quite without support of evidence. An Englishman who had learned Old Saxon brought it home from the Continent, said Professor Sievers.¹ Some Saxon monk, coming to England, perhaps the John who was made abbot of Æthelney (Somerset) in the reign of Ælfred, introduced the poem, conjectured ten Brink.² But these guesses have done little more than hint at possibilities; they have been the merest conjectures. The historical evidence that has been brought forward is of a kind to prove the influence of England on Germany, not at all of Germany on England, except for the surprising phenomenon of *Genesis B* itself. The poem is unique from every point of view; and the puzzle of its grafting on English literature has long piqued the curiosity of scholars.

With considerable diffidence, since I can support my theory with nothing but circumstantial evidence, I am going to hazard a new conjecture as to the man who brought the Old Saxon *Genesis* to England. I am able, furthermore, to give with assurance only the initial of his name, though I can show that what is known about his career makes his transmission of the poem both possible and, to my thinking, probable.

About the year 1000 there was written a life of St. Dunstan,³ who had died in 988.

¹ *Der Heliand und die angelsächsische Genesis*, p. 16.

² *History of English Literature*, English trans., 1889, I, 82, note.

³ Edited by Stubbs, *Memorials of St. Dunstan*, 1874 (Rolls Series, 63), pp. 3-52.

The author of this *Vita*, which is the earliest extant biography of the great archbishop, describes himself, in the somewhat fulsome and pompous prologue, as "omnium extimus sacerdotum B. vilisque Saxonum indigena." He pleads his lack of qualifications for his task, "nisi forte quæ vel videndo vel audiendo, licet intellectu torpenti, ab ipso didiceram, vel etiam ex ejus alumnis." Twice he asserts that he has seen the events that he narrates. Because of his description of himself as priest and his silence as to Dunstan's monastic reforms, one may infer that he was not a monk,⁴ but a clerical scholar who had found with Dunstan both service and friendship. Quite clearly, he had been associated with Dunstan so long and intimately that he knew the whole course of the saint's life and could write a sketch of him without difficulty. Bishop Stubbs conjectured that he got the stories of the childhood, and of the early temptations and visions, from Dunstan's own lips.⁵ Indeed, B.'s work is singularly free from miracles of the grosser sort; it illustrates very admirably the character of his master, and thus shows his claim to sainthood.

B. everywhere writes as a friend and follower of Dunstan, but incidentally as a foreigner. Not only does he speak of himself as "vilis Saxonum indigena," but he refers to things English as a native would not have done. Thus an evil spirit responds to Dunstan "voce Saxonica se ex Orientis regni partibus esse."⁶ Again, the term "senioratus" for "patron" is used, though it was never employed, according to Stubbs, except on the Continent.⁷ From such indications it seems clear that B. was a Saxon scholar from the Continent, who had found a patron and friend in Dunstan. He seems to have been learned according to

⁴ See Stubbs, p. xi.

⁵ Stubbs, p. lvii.

⁶ Cap. 33.

⁷ See the discussion of B.'s origin by Stubbs, pp. xii-xviii.

his fashion, for he quotes a poem by Sedulius,⁸ and accomplished in letters, if the composition of bad verse be a criterion; but he cannot be commended for his Latin style, which is cumbrous and sometimes obscure. He seems, however, to have been devoted to his master; and he gave with candor and insight the results of his personal observation.

By a brilliant conjecture, Bishop Stubbs threw further light on B., showing that he was, in all probability, the writer of three letters of the period. In the first of these,⁹ a man who calls himself "B. fæx Christicolarum," addresses Dunstan's successor at Canterbury, Æthelgar, regretting the loss of those literary and educational advantages that his youth had known under the patronage of the Bishop of Liège, since whose death he has been exiled from Wisdom's Court. It appears that Æthelgar has commissioned B. to go to Winchester, there either to examine or to copy a manuscript of Aldhelm's *De Laudibus Virginitatis*. The second letter¹⁰ was written by a man who places himself under the protection of Dunstan, describing himself as "exilii catenulis admodum retitus." In the third letter,¹¹ which is addressed to some person whose name is only indicated by the initial N., the writer calls himself "bellus sed causa, si dici liceat, infortunii misellus." He says that, after leaving his patron and crossing the sea, he has run into debt for the purchase or hire of a horse on landing, and stands in danger of being sold.

The circumstances mentioned in these letters, no less than their style,¹² persuaded Bishop Stubbs that they were written by one man, and that he was the author of the early

biography of Dunstan. Certainly "B. fæx Christicolarum" recalls vividly enough the "omnium extimus sacerdotum B. vilisque Saxonum indigena" of the prologue; nor is it likely that there could have been in England at one time two wandering scholars, whose affairs would so perfectly accord with what we learn about the author of the *Vita*. The pun in the third letter is difficult to interpret. "What name is indicated by the initial B. can only be conjectured," says Stubbs; "it may have been the common Saxon Bruno; or some name to which the Latin 'Bellus' might be supposed to answer, one of the many names that begin with Bert, or it may have been Benedict or even Beda."¹³ Something more precise than this may be attempted. The name may have been Berht (Beorht); which is of common occurrence; or, not impossibly, it may have been Berhtram,¹⁴ which would account for both "bellus" and "misellus." I must leave the matter so, and pass to the more important question of this Saxon B.'s continental relations.

What we learn of them seems at once to justify the identification of the letter-writer with the biographer and to make it very likely that B. would bring a Saxon poem with him to England. The Bishop of Liège mentioned in the first letter could be no one, as Stubbs showed,¹⁵ save Evraclus¹⁶ (Ebrachar, Ever-

⁸ P. xxvi.

¹⁴ This second conjecture depends on the possibility that B. etymologized Berhtram as *Berht* (*beorht*) + *arm* (*earn*). The form Bærhtram appears in a tenth century document from Kent, printed in Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum*, no. 1010, and in Kemble, *Codex Diplomaticus*, no. 477. Professor Frederick Tupper reminds me "that we often have in such cases the Latin synonym of only one member of a compound name," which makes my first conjecture plausible. *Lupus* for Wulfstan is a well-known instance, and Boniface's *Caritas* for the Abbess Leobgyth is of the same character (see Tupper, *The Riddles of the Exeter Book*, p. xlv).

¹⁵ P. xxv.

¹⁶ For the career of Evraclus, see the account by Anselm, *Gesta pontificum Leodiensis*, cap. 24, ed. Koepke, *M.H.G. SS.* vii, 201-202; Reinerus, *Vita Evracli Leodiensium memorabilis episcopi*, ed. Pez,

⁹ Cap. 36. Two verses from *Veteris et Novi Testamenti Collatio*.

¹⁰ Printed by Stubbs, pp. 385-388, from mss. Cott. Tib. A. 15 and Vesp. A. 14.

¹¹ Printed by Stubbs, pp. 374-376, from ms. Cott. Tib. A. 15.

¹² Printed by Stubbs, p. 390, from ms. Cott. Tib. A. 15.

¹³ See the discussion by Stubbs, pp. xxii-xxvi. I should note that the letter-writer, like the biographer, has a fondness for making verses.

aclus, Evraclus), who held the see between 959 and 971. Evraclus was one of the extraordinary men of the tenth century. He was a Saxon, studied first at Cologne, and was later a pupil of the unfortunate Ratherius, either at Liège or in Germany. While still a young man, he was made provost of Bonn; and he was elevated to the bishopric of Liège at the instance of the Emperor Otho I and his brother Bruno, Archbishop of Cologne. During his occupancy of the see he did much to raise its ecclesiastical and educational renown: he founded three monasteries, and in one of them, St. Martin's, he established a school that soon came to rival Alcuin's at St. Martin's of Tours. He seems to have been a man of wide and independent learning, for in 969 through his knowledge of astronomy he saved the German army from panic at a total eclipse of the sun; and he encouraged letters by arranging courses of study in monasteries throughout his diocese, as well as by bringing in, often at his own expense, clerks from abroad as teachers. From his youth he was devoted to St. Martin, through whose relics he is said to have been cured of lupus, and to him he dedicated his chief monastery. His last days were clouded by uprisings, of which the cause is unknown. However, his palace was raided by his enemies, and his career ended in disorder.

The evidence, as it stands, makes it clear that B., the letter-writer, did not exaggerate in referring to Liège under Evraclus as the Court of Wisdom. B., the Saxon biographer of Dunstan, is unlikely to have received his

training elsewhere than under the Saxon bishop of the Belgian city, who made his schools during the sixties of the tenth century a gathering point for all the learners and learned of a wide region. Evraclus, it will be noted, was particularly devoted to St. Martin; and the biographer B. seems to have held that saint in special honor, for he mentions him with the greatest reverence and, after the fashion of hagiographers, chooses him for comparison with Dunstan. As far as circumstantial evidence can go, the identification of the letter-writer and the biographer is complete.

Furthermore, I submit that no man could be found more likely to have carried an Old Saxon poem into England than this same B. Himself a Saxon, he was trained, or at any rate was patronized, by a Saxon bishop of the widest intellectual interests, a man who encouraged learning in all its branches and must have been, in the nature of things, a collector of manuscripts. He was exiled by the death of his master, and went to England to find new episcopal patrons. In England he was, once at least, employed in connection with a manuscript, which implies a certain knowledge of such things as well as an interest in them. Evraclus, we saw, died in a time of disorder and most probably left his affairs in confusion. It would have been easy for the poor scholar B., even if he had not previously been so rich in books as Chaucer's Oxford clerk, to put two or three manuscripts in his wallet before he fled into exile. If the palace was looted, as well as raided, he might properly have taken such treasures as were precious to him personally in order to save them from his patron's enemies. He must have been, we are justified in believing both from his nationality and his references to Evraclus, of the Bishop's immediate circle; and he would, accordingly, have had ready access to the palace, whether or not he lived there. I have no wish to romance about B.: the outline of his story is circumstantially complete. I feel no certainty that he brought the Old Saxon *Genesis* to England, because circumstantial evidence cannot give absolute proof; but I think it very probable that he did so. Whether or not he

Thesaurus Anecdotorum, iv, 3, 153-166, Migne, *Patrologiæ Curs. Comp. Lat.* cciv, 117-124, W. Arndt, *M.G.H. SS.* xx, 561-565; F. Cramer, *Geschichte der Erziehung und des Unterrichts in den Niederlanden während des Mittelalters*, 1843, pp. 91-94; A. Le Roy in *Biographie nationale de Belgique* vi, 616-620; *Gallia Christiana* in Migne, *Patrologiæ Curs. Comp. Lat.* cxxxv, 943-946; *Histoire litt. de la France* vi, 335; and S. Balau, *Etude critique des sources de l'histoire du pays de Liège au moyen âge (Mém. couronnés et mém. des savants étrangers*, Acad. Royale de Belgique, 1902-03), pp. 101-102. None of the modern writers, as far as I can see, adds anything to what can be learned from Anselm and Raynier (Reinerus).

translated the poem himself after learning English I do not see that we have any means of deciding.

The acceptance of my conjecture would make the date of *Genesis B.*, I am well aware, some twenty-five years later than the year hitherto accepted as its *terminus ad quem*. The customary view is that expressed by Professor Brandl in Paul's *Grundriss*:¹⁷ "Da die alts. Dichtung gleich der handschrift 'noch in das 9. Jahrhundert' zu setzen ist, dürfen wir die Entstehung des ags. Textes schwerlich vor das 10. Jahrhundert verlegen; und da in der erhaltenen ags. Handschrift noch zahlreiche *ie* begegnen, haben wir die Mitte des 10. Jahrhunderts wohl als untere Grenze anzunehmen." At first sight this evidence looks convincing; but, like the results of too much of the phonological investigation of Old English, it does not bear close scrutiny because it fails to take into account all the factors involved. I do not need, in order to show that the translation of the Old Saxon *Genesis* may have been made in the last quarter of the tenth century, to present a complete phonology of *Genesis B.*¹⁸ I shall merely call attention to a few facts which seem to me to render invalid the argument for 950 as the latest possible date of the translation.

In the first place, the levelling processes in late W.S., affecting short *i*, *y*, and *ie* in stressed syllables, have run their full course as far as *Genesis B.* is concerned: the scribe (or the redactor, if you please) never writes *ie*. The "numerous" instances of the use of *ie*, which are mentioned as proving that the text could not have been written after about 950, are all cases of *ie*. Naturally, long sounds were likely to preserve distinctions that were being lost in the pronunciation of short sounds; a conservative tendency in representing them would by no means be remarkable. Yet, as a matter of fact, the substitution of *ȳ* for *ie*

customary in late W.S., is generally the rule with the scribe of *Genesis B.* I find that he uses *ie* sixty-four times. Of these cases, however, forty-seven are instances of the use of the form *hie* for the third personal pronoun, interchanging with *hēo*. That we might expect to find *hȳ* in a work of the last quarter of the tenth century I do not deny; yet we find *hī* as Ælfric's customary form, and in the *Blickling Homilies*, which have on all accounts to be dated after the Benedictine Reform, we note *hie*, as well as *hī*, *hēo*, and *hȳ*.¹⁹ Evidently, the *ie* in this word is of little value in determining the age of a text.

The other seventeen instances of *ie* in *Genesis B.* must be considered more in detail. They are the following: *ȳeman* 349, *ȳien* 413, *whitesciene* 527, *oðiewdest* 540, *siene* 607, *ȳiet* 618, *sie* 621, *ȳienȳ* 627, *hierran* 633, *iewde* 653, *sciene* 656, *niede* 697, *sciene* 700, *oðiewde* 714, *iewde* 774, *hierde* 797, and *scienost* 821. A glance at this list will make it clear that only eleven words are involved. Of these, *ȳienȳ* is not an O.E. form at all, but O.S., as Sievers showed long since. The ten words thus left are certainly not sufficiently "numerous" to afford weighty evidence that the scribe wrote at a time nearer to Ælfred than to Ælfric, particularly in view of the notes that I shall add as to their use. The forms *ȳien* and *ȳiet* are of uncertain origin²⁰ and of doubtful history. *ȳiet* is found in the *Blickling Homilies*, moreover, along with other forms of the word.²¹ As to the writing of *sciene*, the scribe seems to have been most uncertain. We find *sciene* three times, *scienost* once, *scȳnost* once, *scēne* twice, *scēnran* once, *scēnost* once, *scēone* once, and *scēonost* once. The *ie* occurs in the forms of *iewan* uniformly; but it is found in the *Blickling Homilies* also, and isolated.²² The form *hierde* is exceptional, as it appears once against *hȳrde* nine times.

¹⁷ See A. K. Hardy, *Die Sprache der Blickling Homilien*, §124. It matters little that these homilies were of Anglian origin, since they have all the earmarks of late W.S.

²⁰ See Sievers' *Ags. Gram.*, note to §74.

²¹ See Hardy, §32.

²² See Hardy, §39.

¹⁷ 2te Aufl. II, 1090.

¹⁸ I wish to acknowledge, with my thanks, the use that I have made of an unpublished study of the vowels in *Genesis B.* by my colleague, Professor J. Duncan Spaeth.

Thus far I have tried to show merely that the scribe of *Genesis B.* is a somewhat untrustworthy guide, and that the supposedly numerous instances of *ie* in the work are, in reality, very few. I wish now to point out another significant fact, which seems to have been unnoticed. The use of *ie* in *Genesis B.* must certainly be due to the scribe, or redactor, and not in most instances to the translator, because it is found with about the same frequency in *Genesis A.* In a number of lines equivalent to the number in *Genesis B.* *ie* occurs nine times, aside from the common use of *hie*. Two words (*ȝiet* and *sie*) from the list given above again appear, while *ie* is nowhere found. The correspondence shows, clearly enough, that the occasional use of *ie* in both poems is the result of a conservative tendency on the part either of the copyist or of the man who inserted the Old Saxon translation into the Old English poem. Since *Exodus* and *Daniel* do not show the same looseness in allowing an occasional *ie* to slip in, the copyist of the Junian MS. itself cannot fairly be held responsible.²³ On the other hand, since an old poem like *Genesis A.* shows the same usage as *Genesis B.*, while another old poem like *Exodus* avoids it, no valid argument can be constructed on this evidence as to the *terminus ad quem* of the translation. The use of *ie* appears to be merely a bit of scribal conservatism.²⁴ If my reasoning is justifiable, there is nothing in the way of my conjecture that an expatriate Saxon brought the original of *Genesis B.* to England about 971; at least, there is no chronological difficulty.

Furthermore, and finally, the last quarter of the tenth century is, on historical grounds, a far more probable date for the introduction and translation of *Genesis* than the first half of the century. The revival of letters under Ælfred soon spent its force, or rather was

destroyed by the Scandinavian invaders. On the unimpeachable authority of Ælfred we learn that when Dunstan and Æthelwold started their reform "no English priest could write or understand a letter in Latin."²⁵ Dunstan was made abbot of Glastonbury in 946 or thereabouts, and Æthelwold was granted the charter of Abingdon about 954. Ælfred further says, speaking of his reasons for composing his own homilies: "and me ofhreow ȝæt hi ne cupon ne næfdon ȝa godspellican lare on heora gewritum, buton ȝam mannum anum ȝe ȝæt Leden cuðon, and buton ȝam bocum ȝe Ælfred cyning snoterlice awende of Ledene on Englisc, ȝa synd to hæbbene."²⁶ It is most unlikely, in these circumstances, that the Old Saxon poem would have been brought to England, or translated there, during the half-century of intellectual dearth which followed the death of Ælfred. But in spite of its peculiarities and possible archaisms, *Genesis B.* is unmistakably post-Ælfredian in its language. If not of Ælfred's time, there is every reason to believe that it would have been neither imported nor translated until after the Benedictine reform. Thus again it seems probable that the Saxon priest B. brought with him to England a poem in his native tongue.

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DIE DOPPELDRUCKE VON GOETHE'S WERKEN, 1806-1808

Die sogenannte "Zweite Auflage" der ersten Cottaschen Ausgabe der Werke ist eingehend besprochen worden von J. T. Hatfield im *Journal of Germanic Philology*, Bd. V. S. 341-352, wo auch auf die frühere Literatur hingewiesen wird. Es handelt sich hier aber keineswegs um eine "Zweite Auflage," obwohl dies auch Hirzel¹ an-

²³ I note but one case of *ie* in *Exodus*, save for *hie*, which is frequently used.

²⁴ A similar conservatism is shown in words with *ea* (breaking of *a*) before *i* + cons. *Ea* is prevalent, but *a* is kept in *aldor* (ruler), *aldre* (on, to *aldre*), *alwalda*, and *waldend*, apparently as archaic and consecrated forms.

²⁵ English preface to his *Grammar*, ed. Zupitza, p. 3.

²⁶ *Sermones Catholici*, ed. Thorpe, 1, 2.

¹ *Verzeichniss einer Goethe-Bibliothek* (1884), S. 65.